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**SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL-MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA**

May 1986

Prepared by the Federal Research Division of  
the Library of Congress under an interagency agreement

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## PREFACE

This chronology is organized by region, country, and date of event. The date of event is sometimes difficult to determine because it varies from source to source. Some sources cite the actual date of the incident whereas others appear to use the official news release dateline. When possible, the actual date of the occurrence is listed.

Analysts contributing to this chronology are Robert Handloff, Mary Louise Harmon, Moses Pinkston, and Rachel Warner.

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East/Central Africa

Sao Tome and Principe

11/05/86 Carlos da Graca resigns as leader of the National Resistance Front, one of the two exiled opposition parties constituting the recently formed Democratic Opposition Coalition (DOC). Da Graca, a former Minister of Health, says his resignation is prompted by the government's increasingly liberal economic policies and its improved relations with its neighbors. He also added that he would like to play a part in Sao Tome's turn to the West, but will not return as long as the 1,000 to 1,500 Angolan troops remain on the island.

13/05/86 President Pinto da Costa begins a 3-day visit to Gabon as part of recent moves to improve ties with neighboring states. Bilateral relations have improved since the government has liberalized its economy and explored the possibility of joining both the CFA franc zone and the Central African Customs Union (UDEAC). These measures offer further evidence of the government's wish to strengthen its relations with the West at the expense of the Soviet Union.

Uganda

05/05/86 President Museveni holds peace discussions in Entebbe with a seven-man delegation representing former President Okello. The delegation members, who voluntarily gave up their arms to the National Resistance Army (NRA), are led by Lieutenant Colonel Abeid. Also present at the discussions is NRA Commander and National Resistance Council member Lieutenant Salim Saleh.

06/05/86 For the first time in recent history, the government sets up a commission of inquiry to investigate the pervasive corruption which has become endemic over the past 15 years. The commission will probe all government ministries and state corporations for financial mismanagement and corruption, and will investigate how government contracts and tenders were negotiated and then awarded, the criteria used in the selection and appointment of public officers at all levels, and how these officials used public property under their control.

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10/05/86 President Museveni states at a rally in Luwero that former President Milton Obote was plotting to assassinate members of the new government. The alleged plot is thought to have been organized by members of an antigovernment group known as Force Obote Back Again (FOBA). Sources say an attempt to assassinate Museveni was made in late April on the Kampala-Entebbe road.

Uganda/Tanzania

24/05/86 Ugandan President Museveni and Tanzanian President Mwinyi hold talks in the Tanzanian capital, Dar es Salaam, on bilateral issues, including the reactivation of the joint permanent commission which was established in 1983.

Horn of Africa

Ethiopia

25/04/86 US Congressional sources announce that the United States is contemplating a covert paramilitary training program for the insurgent Ethiopian People's Democratic Alliance (EPDA), a London-based group of former officials of ex-Emperor Haile Selassie. This step is being considered in light of the little success which the United States has had in trying to improve relations with the Mengistu government.

26/04/86 One thousand Ethiopian government soldiers, captured by Eritrean insurgents during the past year, are handed over to Ethiopian organizations opposed to the continuation of the war.

21/05/86 According to reports in the capital, Addis Ababa, the government has sent about 75,000 heavily armed soldiers into Eritrea, anticipating a new flareup in fighting with

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Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) guerrillas. It is believed that the EPLF may launch an offensive to coincide with the coming rainy season. In an attack on 12 May, EPLF guerrillas blew up a major kerosene depot owned by the Italian oil firm, AGIP, in the Red Sea port of Massawa. However, the government claims that the attack did not cause any fuel shortages in the region.

Somalia

20/05/86 Somali government forces attack the eastern base of the Somali National Movement (SNM). SNM fighters counterattack the advancing government soldiers, killing six and wounding many others.

23/05/86 President Siad Barre and other government officials accompanying him are involved in a car accident about 13 kilometers from Mogadishu on the Mogadishu-Afgoi road. The President was on his way back from a routine inspection tour of the lower Shabeelle region. The President and those accompanying him, including the Mayor of Mogadishu, Challe Hassan Abshir Farah, are first taken to Madina hospital and then flown to a military hospital in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, where the President's condition is stated to be satisfactory. According to reports, many people were killed at the scene of the accident when, after the President's car collided with a bus, his security officers, who are members of the Somali military police force, opened fire.

Somalia/Ethiopia

07/05/86 A 17-member Somali delegation, led by Foreign Affairs Minister Abdel-Rahman Jama Barre, arrives in Addis Ababa for the first meeting of the joint commission set up to attempt to resolve the longstanding conflict over the Ogaden region. The commission was formed after Somali President Siad Barre and Ethiopian Head of State Mengistu met for the first time in over 9 years at the Djibouti summit of the Inter-Governmental Authority.

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Sudan

02/05/86

In a press statement to the Sudan News Agency, the Islamic National Front (INF) says that it will not take part in the proposed national unity government if the charter of the government does not take into consideration the Islamic Sharia laws, the future of governing southern Sudan, and regionalism. INF Politburo member Ali Uthman Mohamed Taha said that the leaders of the political parties were busy in the distribution of ministerial portfolios without paying attention to the charter. Observers believe that the Umma Party of Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi and the Democratic Unionist Party will form the new government, while the INF will lead the opposition. The National Unity Charter, according to which the government will be formed, calls for issuing new laws based on the Quran, Sunna, and conventions to cope with new development and to guarantee the rights of non-Muslims and other minorities.

06/05/86

The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) captures the strategic town of Adok in western Upper Nile. Adok, commonly referred to as Adok al-Bahr, is a river port along the Nile route between Malakal and Juba, and had been serving as an important fuel depot and base for the operations of Chevron oil company.

06/05/86

The five-member Supreme Council, which acts as collective head of state, is sworn in. The membership of Sudan's first democratically elected government in 17 years was formally announced to Parliament on 15 April by Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi, ending almost a month of bargaining over the composition of the new coalition. The strategic ministries of foreign affairs, interior, defense, and finance are divided equally between the Umma Party (UP), to which Prime Minister Sadiq al-Mahdi belongs, and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), led by Mohammed Osman el-Mirghani. Although the composition of the new cabinet appears to signal the government's intention of tackling the fundamental issues facing the country, it will be some time before it becomes clear how far it will be able to translate that intention into action, in particular the formulation of acceptable

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national policies on resolving the conflict with the south and Sharia law.

18/05/86 A Buffalo military transport aircraft is shot down by the SPLA over Rumbek, killing the military commander of Rumbek and its commissioner, three officers, three noncommissioned officers, a bishop, and a relief official. The helicopter was attempting to fly into Rumbek with vitally needed supplies for besieged government troops in the isolated government garrison. The shooting down of the aircraft is further evidence of the government's increasingly threatened military position in the south.

Indian Ocean Islands

Seychelles

22/05/86 Moubarak al-Chamekh, Secretary of the Libyan People's Committee for Communications and Maritime Transports, leads a five-member delegation to the Seychelles as the special envoy of Libyan leader Qadhafi. Seychellois President Rene is given a message from Qadhafi relating to the US raid on Tripoli and Benghazi.

Sahel

Chad

04/05/86 Government sources claim that peace has returned to southern Chad after nearly 4 years of civil war. Sources in Sara, the south's largest city, said the only rebel militia not to have rallied to the Habre government is the Espoir group operating near the border with Central African Republic. But they added that the Espoir guerrillas, led by Lieutenant Laobe, had been inactive for the past several weeks. A former leader of one of the largest of a dozen rebel groups which have responded to government peace appeals, Colonel Alphonse Kotiga, is currently in the southern Moundou-Lai region, negotiating with Laobe on behalf of the Habre government. Kotiga signed a peace agreement with Habre in February which included an amnesty for his men and their incorporation into the national army.



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25/05/86 General Lucien Beal, head of the military mission of the French Ministry of Cooperation, arrives for a 4-day official visit. General Beal tells the press that the aim of his mission is to discuss military cooperation between France and Chad. France's military involvement in Chad since last February, referred to as Operation Epervier, was the result of renewed fighting between government forces and Libyan-backed Transitional Government of National Unity (GUNT) forces in the north. According to Beal, the French deterrent force will remain in Chad for as long as the N'Djamena government wishes.

Southern Africa

Angola

07/05/86 During the official visit by President dos Santos to the Soviet Union, Soviet leader Gorbachev repeats that his country will stand by its treaty of friendship with Angola. A new treaty is signed for the period from 1986 to 1988. The visit and reaffirmation of Soviet support follows recent claims by the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) that the first US military assistance delivery to UNITA had arrived.

Lesotho

20/05/86 Five political parties, the Marematiuo Freedom Party, the United Democratic Party, the National Independent Party, the Basotholand Congress Party, and the Basotho Democratic Alliance, call on the ruling Military Council to form an all-party government of national reconciliation. Defying a ban on political activity of any sort, the five parties issue the statement in which it is claimed that the country is ready for a civilian government and that there is no justification for protracted military rule. All five parties were in opposition during the rule of Chief Leabua Jonathan, the former prime minister overthrown in a January 1986 coup.

Namibia

01/05/86 There is strong speculation that a South African Defense Force Dakota airplane was hit by a SWAPO-launched SAM-7

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surface-to-air missile, and forced to land in northern Namibia.

23/05/86 SWAPO guerrillas shoot down a South African C-160 aircraft in the area of Ukwaludhi in northern Namibia. This is the third time SWAPO guerrillas have shot down a South African aircraft in less than a month.

06/06/86 A spokesman for Namibian security forces announces that South West Africa People's Organization (SWAPO) guerrillas were responsible for a blast that badly damaged a state hospital in Tsandi in northern Namibia, causing no casualties. The spokesman said that the attack might have been timed to coincide with Cassinga Day, which commemorates a raid by South African forces on a SWAPO camp in Cassinga, Angola, on 4 May 1978.

South Africa

26/04/86 It is announced that a new territorial command of the South African Army is to be established to cover the northern Cape. It will include the South African-Namibian border and a part of the border with Botswana. The Namibian border has, until now, formed a rather distant part of Western Province Command, which is headquartered in Cape Town. The formation of this new command may be an indication that the Army is planning for the possibility of a less-than-friendly government in Namibia, but could also be the result of Botswana's demonstrated inability to prevent African National Congress (ANC) groups from passing through its territory. The existing Southern Cape Command is to be absorbed within a restructured Western Province Command. The South African Army has nine regional commands which are responsible for the security of their areas and also have certain administrative responsibilities toward the Army as a whole.

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- 01/05/86 About 1.5 million blacks stay away from work in what labor specialists call the biggest strike ever witnessed in South Africa. The stoppage was called to press demands for an official May Day public holiday, and seemed a reflection of the growing readiness of militant labor unions to become embroiled in political activism. Many black schools are also deserted as pupils boycott classes in support of the strike. In Port Elizabeth, the stoppage is nearly total, forcing whites to undertake menial tasks normally left to blacks. In Durban, divisions among the nation's black majority are reinforced when 70,000 Zulu supporters of Chief Buthelezi converge on a stadium to celebrate the launch of a new labor federation, the United Worker's Union of South Africa. The new group is designed to challenge the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), which opposes Chief Buthelezi.
- 02/05/86 The government signals its readiness to enter into talks about the possibility of legalizing the banned ANC and releasing Nelson Mandela, the ANC's most prominent leader. The signal is conveyed in London by an envoy of President Botha to a delegation of Commonwealth leaders. The seven Commonwealth leaders, known as the Eminent Persons Group, visited South Africa in March and were permitted to hold political talks with Mandela. The message, which carries no firm decision, is deemed to be sufficiently encouraging for the Commonwealth Group to schedule a return visit to South Africa by the middle of May in the hopes of becoming mediators.
- 11/05/86 The authorities announce that overnight violence in Johannesburg resulted in the killing of three black youths in Soweto by a policeman who opened fire on a crowd of blacks stoning a government car, and the burning of a bus driver in Guguletu Township near Cape Town by a gang of blacks. Meanwhile, policemen and soldiers continue to search houses and set up roadblocks in Alexandra Township following violence there.

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Southern Africa

**South Africa**

21/05/86 According to official reports, at least 22 people have been killed in recent violence around the country between black antiapartheid groups and more conservative blacks. The worst violence was in the Crossroads squatter camp near Cape Town, which has been gripped by factional strife since 18 May. Thousands have been left homeless, and at least 16 people have died in battles between radicals and conservatives, who have set fire to one another's homes and fought with sticks, clubs, knives, and firearms. In Durban's KwaMashu township, the police report finding six bodies, some of which had been incinerated with gasoline. Residents say that the dead were conservatives who had been trying to end a school boycott enforced by a radical group.

23/05/86 Foreign Minister Pik Botha is forced to cancel a rally by the governing National Party when hundreds of rightwing white militants, members of the Afrikaner Resistance Movement, besiege the meeting hall. The clash takes place in Pietersburg, a trading center in the conservative Northern Transvaal region, where many whites have consistently opposed any shift away from apartheid policies. The incident, a humiliation for the government, is also bound to be depicted by the white authorities to outside critics as an illustration of the domestic political constraints slowing their program of limited racial liberalization.

25/05/86 Authorities are preparing tough new legislation that will enable them to crack down on opponents in areas of unrest and detain them without charge or trial for 6 months. Opposition legislators say that the new laws seem designed to give the authorities the same powers they had under the state of emergency lifted last March without formally declaring new emergency measures. The laws are amendments to existing, far-reaching security laws, and would prevent courts from scrutinizing actions by the security forces in areas of unrest. They would also make it possible for the government to declare total news censorship.

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**26/05/86** Continuing violence in the Crossroads squatter camp near Cape Town results in more than 30 deaths during fighting between conservative and radical black groups. The fighting, in which the radicals were defeated, has devastated large tracts of the camp, causing the loss of homes to as many as 30,000 people. The conflict has not only highlighted territorial disputes between rival groups in the Crossroads, but also raises questions about the role of South Africa's security forces, which actively supported the conservative groups. In many of South Africa's segregated black townships, conservative black groups have banded together to form vigilante units opposed to the growing influence of youthful black radicals. Critics of the apartheid government claim that the vigilante groups have not been restrained because they suit the purpose of security forces in clamping down on black protest.

**Southern Africa**

**19/05/86** South African forces attack the capitals of Botswana, Zambia, and Zimbabwe as part of a continuing drive against African National Congress (ANC) guerrillas. The coordinated raids on what South African officials claim are facilities used by the ANC comprise the most extensive military action by South Africa in its 25-year-old war against the ANC, the most prominent of exiled and outlawed movements seeking the overthrow of South African white minority rule. The raids involve attacks by aircraft on the Zambian capital of Lusaka, and by helicopter-borne commandos in and around Botswana's capital, Gaborone, and Zimbabwe's capital, Harare. It is the first time that South Africa has struck directly at Zambia and Zimbabwe. Although few people appear to have been killed in any of the three attacks, there is extensive property damage at all three locations. The raids force the suspension of efforts by the Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group to seek talks between South Africa and the ANC.

**Swaziland**

**09/05/86** The trial of Prince Mfanasibili Dlamini, once one of Swaziland's most powerful politicians, begins. Dlamini is charged with defeating the ends of justice in connection with the year-long detention from late 1984 of former